



CITY OF GAITHERSBURG
MINUTES OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

March 9, 2004
7:00-9:00 p.m.

A meeting of the Environmental Affairs Committee was held at 7:00 p.m. at City Hall. Committee members present: Nina Baird, Ken Gemmell, Dave Hondowicz, Matt Hopkins, Rachel Hopp, John Hudson, Toni Hudson, and Jim Simpson. Staff present: Environmental Specialist Erica Shingara and Administrative Liaison Meredith Strider. Guest speakers: Mary Richmond, Montgomery County Department of Environmental Protection and Captain Tom Vegella, Izaak Walton League.

I. Call to Order.

The meeting was called to order at 7:09 p.m.

II. Local Air Quality: Ms. Mary Richmond, Montgomery County Department of Environmental Protection (DEP).

Gaithersburg and Montgomery County are non-attainment areas for air quality, which means that the region does not meet the National Ambient Air Quality Standards. The region is considered a 'severe' non-attainment area for the one-hour ozone standard and is not expected to meet the new stricter 8-hour ozone standard and the fine particulate matter standard.

Poor air quality also affects water quality, crops, and building materials.

The County's Ozone Action Plan seeks to provide relief on "code red" days by offering free bus rides and encouraging people to fuel after dark, and stop pesticide and herbicide application, paint striping, lawn mowing, and asphalt paving activities.

DEP is drafting an Air Strategy to address the region's air quality issues. The County wants to ensure that residents have healthy air to breathe, and set an example for other municipalities to follow.

Montgomery County's air quality protection strategies:

1. Develop an air monitoring network: Montgomery County is shown by the EPA's database to be in the 95th percentile for many air toxics by EPA model data. There is currently only one air monitoring facility in Rockville.
2. Reduce emissions from area sources: dry cleaners, auto-shops, gas stations, etc. (41% of volatile organic compounds (VOC) emissions in the County)
3. Reduce emissions from point sources: power plants, factories, trash station (45% of NOx emissions in County)
4. Reduce emissions from the County fleet including buses, county vehicles, etc.; leading by example will encourage others to convert their fleets as well
5. Decrease emissions from mobile sources: need action which will reduce overall vehicle emissions in the future.
6. Decrease greenhouse gas emissions.
7. Increase tree canopy and forest cover; boosts pollutant removal rates and energy savings
8. Decrease emissions from public activities, including painting and lawn mowing. Rebate program for exchange of gas-powered equipment.

III. Gaithersburg Stream Restoration.

Jim Simpson introduced Captain Tom Vegella, Environmental Health Officer, USPHS. He is also a participant

of the Izaak Walton League Save Our Stream program.

The subject stream is a tributary of Great Seneca that has much potential. The lakes in Montgomery Village feed into it, and the stream runs from Watkins Mill to the Potomac.

The IWLA conducts a stream monitoring program and is also looking into permanent equipment for continuous monitoring. Stream quality can be measured by taking a sample and examining the population of insects. The quality is determined by the life it can support. This stream is in fair to poor quality.

The program currently has \$1500 for stream maintenance (e.g., tree planting, bank restoration, fish cover, etc.) and is capable of getting additional funds. The organization is looking for volunteers and technical assistance. Gaithersburg, Montgomery County Department of Environmental Protection, and the U.S. Army Corps (ACE) of Engineers are partners in a cost-share program to conduct a Great Seneca Watershed Study that will analyze the watershed and develop stream stabilization and stormwater management designs. It will take approximately 3 years to complete the study and then stabilizations projects will follow (based on the availability of funds). For the short term assistance, Gaithersburg can forward volunteers (Eagle Scouts, etc.) to the IWLA and could possibly partner with the IWLA on monitoring and planting projects.

For a long term solution, the IWLA should contact Dan Harper at DEP. He oversees watershed projects and handles design and construction contracts. If this site is brought to his attention and if it meets their criteria, the ACE will develop stabilization designs for the site and manage construction.

The next stream study will be April 3rd. There is an open invitation and everyone will meet at the clubhouse at 9 a.m.

Contact info: Tom Vegella: 301 540 3374; txv@prodigy.net

IV. Approval of Minutes.

Approved the Minutes of the February 10, 2004 meeting.

V. City Environmental Update.

Gaithersburg City Council Members voted Monday, March 1 to adopt Option II of three proposed Smoking Ordinances which would further regulate smoking in restaurants. The ordinance will go into effect Monday, March 22, 2004. Option II includes a one-year phase out for establishments with separate ventilation systems. The Youth Environmental Program is on the website with past projects and contacts.

On Thursday, Forest Oak Middle School will shoot their recycling video. Rachel Hopp will give Erica contact information for Charlie Garlow of EPA.

The City is considering an adequate public facilities ordinance and reviewing traffic, transportation, and school studies to determine where infrastructure and other facilities are needed in the City.

The Monument project (by Watkins Mill extended) may consider building green..

Dates for spring projects and Environmental Awareness Week are on the website. April 26th is Environmental Awards Ceremony, April 29th is Arbor Day, and April 22nd is Community Cleanup Day.

VI. Master Plan Environmental Element.

Revisions will be taking place over the next couple of weeks in order to release the draft to the public at the end of March.

Action item: Committee members should send Erica Shingara any revisions or comments on the Master Plan.

VII. Environmental Awareness Week.

Environmental Award letters and nomination forms have been mailed out to schools, HOAs, and businesses. Nominations are due April 2nd.

Action item: Committee members should contact businesses and organizations to encourage participation in the awards program.

VIII. Green Building Update.

Youth Center should get 26 points to meet LEED Certification requirements.

- IX. Other Local Water Quality.
 - HOA fertilizer/pesticide contracts run on a January-December schedule, so letters need to be sent out earlier in order for there to be consideration.
 - Action item: Erica Shingara will send out letters.

- X. New Business.
 - Nina Baird will conduct an air leak test at Matt Hopkin's house. Committee members are invited to attend.
 - Action item: Nina will email the date information.

- XI. Next meeting.
 - Date: Tuesday, April 13th at 7:00 p.m.
 - Agenda items: Review Environmental Award nomination forms, Environmental Awareness Week, local air quality, green building.

- XII. Adjourned at 9:20 p.m.